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## Vatican suddenly quiet on alleged Bulgarian link to plot against Pope

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There are indications the Vatican prefers to forget allegations of Bulgarian links to the shooting of Pope John Paul II.

Rumors in the Vatican that the East bloc engineered an attempt on the Pope's life in 1981 in order to calm the Polish situation have abruptly been silenced. Senior Vatican prelates, who last month said they believed the Soviet KGB was involved now refuse to discuss the matter.

A Polish Vatican source said this silence coincides with the time the church began receiving signals from Poland that a papal visit to Poland would be allowed.

Only weeks before, an official Soviet news agency issued an attack on the Pope, charging that he was "encouraging anti-socialist forces in Poland." Now, in a radical shift, there is talk that diplomatic relations between Poland and the Vatican may be established.

At the same time, Italian authorities are doggedly pursuing the Bulgarian angle.

Judge Ilario Martella has not yet turned up firm proof that the Bulgarian secret service and the Soviet KGB were behind the plot, but there are indications he is on the right track, says a Christian Democratic Party official.

In December, the French government received a message from Moscow saying the Soviet Communist Party directorate, on which ex-KGB chief and Communist Party Chief Yuri Andropov sits, is very "preoccupied" with the case. The message was interpreted as a veiled warning not to dig too deep, diplomatic sources said.

The French government received a similar message from Bulgaria's leader, Todor Zhivkov, sources say. Both messages were passed along to the Italian government.